

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR)

SOARing Into a New Year !

Winter 2014

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What is SOAR?

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) is a federal initiative that expedites and improves access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and diagnosed with a mental illness and/or co-occurring disorder. These programs, administered by the Social Security Administration, provide income and access to health insurance for individuals that are unable to work due to medical and/or psychiatric conditions.

The application process is complex and difficult to navigate. Through effective partnerships, technical assistance and training, the SOAR Initiative aims to increase the amount of applications and approvals for vulnerable individuals. For more information about SOAR visit

I want to work, but . . .

Many individuals receiving disability benefits fought for years to obtain this income. Even folks utilizing the SOAR process, which is vastly faster, are relieved and excited to finally have a sustainable income to support them in housing or other needs. Many folks also have the aspiration to return to work. Work brings a sense of accomplishment, additional income, and connection to one's community. However, the work incentives through SSA are complex and difficult to navigate. Individuals often fear losing their benefits and have trouble navigating the traditional employment world independently. Luckily, there are community supports available to assist disability benefit recipients return to work.



The Maryland Mental Health Employment Network (MMHEN) assists individuals to:

- * Estimate the impact of earnings on monthly SSI payments and understand the safety nets available to help SSDI recipients
- * Understand how medical coverage can extend for years into the future even after a permanent return to work
- * Realize how Social Security's Ticket to Work program can help in the achievement of employment goals

<http://www.prainc.com/SOAR>

SOAR Data

As of December 2013, Maryland has processed over 650 SOAR cases. The state wide approval rate is 82% with an average processing time for initial cases at 71 days .

For FY 2014, our approval rate for all SOAR claims is 85%.

Quick Links

www.ssa.gov

<http://www.prainc.com/SOAR>

More questions about SOAR?

If you are new to SOAR within Maryland and want to learn more, contact Marian Bland at marian.bland@maryland.gov or Caroline Bolas at caroline.bolas@maryland.gov

Share what you are doing with SOAR!

Email to mflanagan@hchmd.org
share your successes

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For more information about Social Security's work incentives and safety nets, contact Shannon Smiles, MMHEN's Certified Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC), who is available on Mondays from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. and on Thursdays from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. to consumers, families and professionals. If you would like to learn more about the work of MHHEN, Kathi Santora, Project Manager can be contacted at 410.803.7184

or ksantora@harfordmentalhealth.org



Filing for Disability Just Became Easier!

In the past, when submitting an online application, one had to navigate to two different pages to complete the SSDI application and Adult Disability Report. Now, individuals are able to start the I-claim (SSDI application) and Adult disability report together - receiving one confirmation number. In addition, information will auto-populate in order to save time when entering data!

Sharing our Successes

Congratulations to Baltimore City for reaching the very impressive milestone of 300 SOAR cases! Baltimore City first began submitting data in 2010 and has consistently maintained success rates of over 90%.



Many thanks to all the community partners who have made this possible - especially **Health Care for the Homeless in Baltimore City** who

have submitted more than two-thirds of the 300 claims.

Expansion of SOAR Certification program!



Following a successful pilot, the SOAR certification program is now open to all counties who are currently implementing SOAR! In order to apply for full certification, a provider must have completed the two-day SOAR training, have at least 4/5 SOAR cases approved, complete a self-assessment form and submit supporting documentation. **For more information, contact Caroline Bolas at [410-402-8344](tel:410-402-8344) or caroline.bolas@maryland.gov.**



Celebrating Our Successes !

Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA) and its SOAR community providers are planning a state wide SOAR Celebration that will take place in June 2014. The conference will celebrate the successes of SOAR within Maryland and feature workshops and informational sessions discussing what happens after one obtains disability benefits including housing and employment opportunities and barriers.

More information will follow, but we hope that you will be able to join us!